

Remarks of Jason Mathes

Submitted to the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Section 29 and 31
(Teacher evaluation, tenure and salary)

February 21, 2012

My name is Jason Mathes, and I am a parent and a resident of Glastonbury.

I write to oppose the Governor's Education proposal, a bill that is a misguided rework of policies that have been discredited and disproven in other states. As a parent, I am especially opposed to this bill as it will weaken the quality of education we provide to our children. The bill is flawed in two fundamental sections.

First, basing twenty two and a half percent of a teacher's evaluation only on test scores fails to improve education; in fact, it destroys it and linking a teacher's salary and tenure to that flawed evaluation system makes even less sense. No one has designed a system that can measure a teacher's contribution to a test score and that screens out all the other variables; variables that we know affect a test score: parents' education level, household income, and the level of free and reduced lunches in the school as a whole. We are relying upon a knowingly flawed system.

In Glastonbury, and every other community in the State, we pay trained, professional evaluators to do what a test score cannot, to evaluate teachers. This bill, which links such an evaluation system to a teacher's tenure status, takes the power out of their hands and places it into the hands of a test score. While twenty two and a half percent may not seem like a lot, *any* reliance upon a flawed system, instead of trained professionals, is a step backwards for our state and for our children.

Linking a teacher's job security and salary to a test score, as this bill does, also discourages potential teachers from entering the profession and experienced educators from taking on difficult assignments. What educated young person will want to enter a profession where twenty two and a half percent of his/her evaluation is based on factors mostly outside their control and where that will determine his/her salary and job security? Furthermore, what experienced educator is going to trade an assignment with students and parents committed to education for one in which there are external barriers to educational achievement? To believe that transfer, from say an affluent community to one of our poorer ones, makes someone a worse teacher is false. But that is what an evaluation based on a test score tells us.

I am also concerned about tenure and the serious reduction in due process protections for teachers. Teaching is a political act and it exposes one to outside forces and concerns. Teachers need academic freedom and the freedom to teach without those external forces. I dread that the battles in other states over such issues as evolution will make their way here and into our classroom. A teacher should never be put into a position where his or her job is in danger because a louder or better backed advocate shouts him or her down.

Tenure is not the guarantee of a lifetime job. In fact, many teachers are coached out of the profession each year. Tenure establishes protections against the situations I mentioned above. Teachers are given the opportunity to improve and, if they do not, they are released.

I am asking that you vote against this hasty, misguided legislation. Too many children's educations are depending on this, including my daughter's. Let us bring together all stake holders and craft something that makes sense.